

## Briefs

## Specialty Crops

## Decline in Fresh-Market Pear Output To Boost Prices in 1999

Total U.S. pear production for 1999 is forecast down 1 percent from 1998, to 1.9 billion pounds. While harvest of Bartlett pears is projected to reach 1 billion pounds, up 6 percent from 1998, production of other U.S. pear varieties is forecast at 854 million pounds, down 9 percent from last year. Bartlett pears accounted for more than half of total U.S. pear production during the last 3 years, but this year's increase is not large enough to offset the decrease in other-than-Bartletts. The overall decline in pear production this year, along with decreased supplies of domestic-grown apples, indicates higher grower prices for fresh-market pears in 1999/2000.

Bartlett production is forecast up in the three Pacific Coast states that produce nearly all the U.S. Bartlett pear crop. California expects a 3-percent rise from 1998, Washington 14 percent, and Oregon 2 percent during 1999. Over 70 percent of U.S. Bartlett pears are usually processed, while the balance are marketed mostly during the summer. Downturns for other-

than-Bartlett are projected at 4 percent in Washington and 15 percent in Oregon, but California production remains essentially unchanged. Typically, over 80 percent of other-than-Bartlett pears are for fresh use in the fall and winter months.

Good quality and fruit size are being reported for the Bartlett pear harvest in California. In Oregon and Washington, cold winter conditions that lasted through spring slowed crop development. In other pear-producing states, specifically in the Northeast region, drought conditions are resulting in smaller size fruit.

The delay in harvesting pear crops in Washington and Oregon could give an additional boost to grower prices. However, significantly larger carryover inventories could offset some price strength. Stocks of fresh pears (other-than-Bartlett varieties) in cold storage as of June 30, 1999, were 59 percent larger than the same time in 1998. Grower prices for fresh-market pears, averaging 7 percent higher than a year ago for the first

6 months of 1999, reflected reduced fresh-market production in the fall of 1998. In July and August—the first two months of the 1999/2000 marketing season—fresh pears averaged 20.2 cents a pound (\$404 per ton), 18 percent higher than the average in July/August 1998.

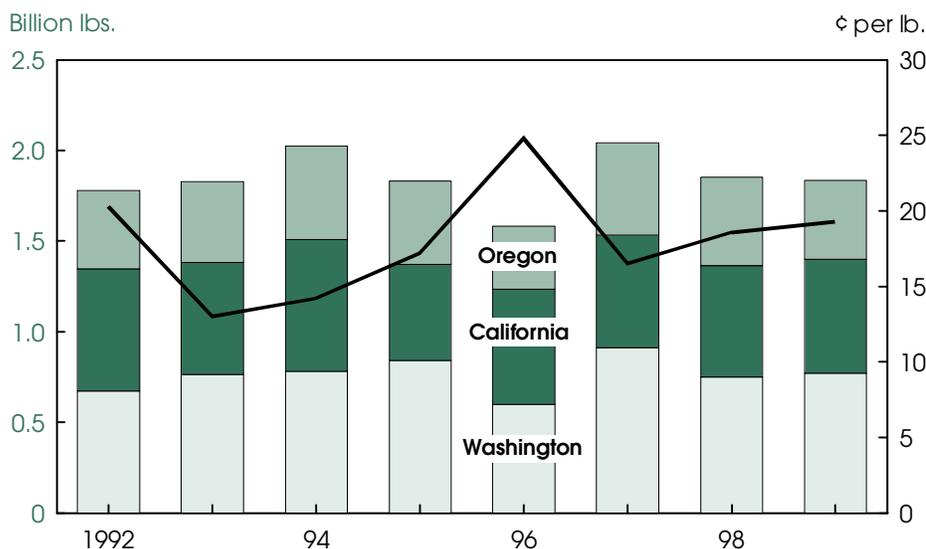
Typically, stocks of Bartlett pears in cold storage are depleted by the end of the marketing season. But as of June 30, 1999, Bartlett stocks totaled 3.7 million pounds, compared with zero a year earlier. Despite last year's lower production, grower prices for processing pears averaged 8 percent lower in 1998/99 compared with the previous season.

Decreased production in 1998 raised U.S. imports of fresh pears during 1998/99 (July-June) to 190.5 million pounds, 27 percent above the previous season. During the same period, U.S. exports of fresh pears fell to 305.2 million pounds, 16 percent below record levels the year before. The smaller 1998 U.S. pear crop, higher U.S. prices, increased supplies from the European Union (EU), and weakened economies facing Brazil and many Asian countries all contributed to the decline in U.S. pear exports during 1998/99.

Export volume fell significantly among four of the five principal U.S. purchasers: the EU (down 36 percent), Canada (down 17 percent), Brazil (down 41 percent), and Taiwan (down 7 percent). Exports to Mexico, however, rose 8 percent. Combined shipments to these markets made up 87 percent of total U.S. pear exports during 1998/99. Lower U.S. fresh-market supplies that are likely this year, along with expectations of higher prices, will again limit U.S. export prospects during 1999/2000. **AO**

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## Pear Production Dip in 1999 To Yield Higher Fresh-Market Price



1999 forecast. Production is all pears; excludes minor amounts from other states. Price is for fresh-market pears, marketing year July-June.